August 24, 2012

Greetings,

As we begin the 2012-’13 school year, I am excited about working with DPS American Indian students at South and TJ. Last year I worked with counselors at South, TJ, Lincoln, and DSST to support American Indian students on a limited basis. In my new role as an American Indian Resource Specialist, I will be collaborating with counselors, teachers, parents, and community to assist American Indian students as a mentor in academics, cultural, and social aspects.

The purpose of the Indian Education Program is to promote high school graduation, enhance academic achievement, and nurture the success of American Indian students. This is accomplished by the provision of direct services, referrals, culturally appropriate curriculum development, training, networking, and coordinating services within Denver Public Services, the Denver metro area, and the American Indian Community. The Indian Education staff is available to assist students, parents, and teachers.

As for my background, my tribal heritage is Tongva. We are the original people of Los Angeles and the southern Channel Islands off the coast of LA. I had the honor of visiting San Nicolas Island, the setting for Scott O’Dell’s “Island of the Blue Dolphins.” The island is traditional Tongva homeland and O’Dell’s book is based on a true Tongva story. I am a graduate of CU and my daughter is a recent graduate of CU with a degree in Biomedical Mechanical Engineering.

Professionally I retired from Jefferson County where I taught for over 25 years and served as a Gifted and Talented Resource Consultant. This is my fourth year in DPS and my third year with the Indian Ed Program. After seven and a half years, this summer I left my position as a founding board member of West Denver Prep Charter Schools (now STRIVE Prep). I’m very proud of the gains we made in terms of offering educational equity.

As a DPS employee I have access to Infinite Campus (including schedules, grades, attendance, CSAP scores, contact information, etc.) so that I can better assist American Indian students. I have been reviewing student schedules and data. I will monitor student progress throughout the year and it is my hope that we can communicate openly and work together for the benefit of the student as one of DPS’s new Core Values is STUDENTS FIRST. I have created websites that will contain resources for students and parents for each high school. I will update these sites on a regular basis:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **School:** | **Address:** |
| South High School | <http://southindianed.wikispaces.com/> |
| TJ High School | <http://tjindianed.wikispaces.com/> |

Here is my schedule (subject to change) as we begin the year:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **AM/PM** | **MONDAY** | **TUESDAY** | **WEDNESDAY** | **THURSDAY** | **FRIDAY** |
| AM | TJ (7 AM-1 PM) | SOUTH (7 AM-4 PM) | TJ (7 AM-1 PM) | SOUTH (7 AM-1 PM) | TJ (7 AM-4 PM) |
| PM | MERRILL (2-4 PM) | SOUTH | MERRILL (2-4 PM) | MERRILL (2-4 PM) | TJ |

I am looking forward to this opportunity working with you to support the success of American Indian students in DPS. **Please feel free to contact me at anytime regarding any questions or concerns you may have.**

Jerry Lassos  
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